

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 L-02 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-05 NSAE-00 PA-01 RSC-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

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AMCONSUL CALI

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB CO

SUBJECT: TRADE UNION LEADER CONCERNED OVER LABOR SITUATION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. SENATOR TULIO CUEVAS, UTC PRESIDENT, TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT HE WAS EXTREMELY CONCERNED OVER THE INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE ACTIVITY OF THE COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED CSTC, WHICH HE SAID WAS FACILITATED BY THE INATTENTION OR COMPLACENCY OF THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT. CUEVAS SAID THAT IF THE GOC CONTINUED THIS POLICY THERE WAS A STRONG LIKELIHOOD THAT COLOMBIA WOULD FACE SERIOUS LABOR DISTURBANCES DURING JAN AND FEB. END SUMMARY.

2. CUEVAS CITED CURRENT STRIKES BY EMPLOYEES OF THE BANCO POPULAR AND OF THE COLOMBIAN AGRARIAN REFORM INSTITUTE (INCORA) BOTH CONTROLLED BY THE CSTC. BOTH OF THESE ARE GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND THEREFORE THE STRIKES ARE ILLEGAL. YET THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN NO ACTION REGARDING THESE STRIKES, CUEVAS SAID. HE BELIEVED THAT THE STRIKES WERE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF A GENERAL COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND THAT BROADER SECTORS OF THE LABOR FORCE WOULD

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BE MOBILIZED IN STRIKE ACTIONS AIMED AT THE GOVERNMENT,

ONCE THE EUPHORIA OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON PASSED AND WORKERS WERE AGAIN FACED WITH RISING PRICES AND INCREASING UNEMPLOYMENT, WHICH HE FELT WOULD CONTINUE INTO THE NEW YEAR.

3. THE CSTC HAS HAD SOME NOTEWORTHY SUCCESSES IN GAINING NEW AFFILIATES, CUEVAS SAID. HE CONFIRMED RECENT REPORTS THAT THE AUTONOMOUS TEACHERS FEDERATION (FEDECOLE), WITH 80,000 MEMBERS, HAD DECIDED TO AFFILIATE WITH THE CSTC. ANOTHER IMPORTANT CSTC VICTORY, HE CLAIMED, WAS THE RECENT DEFECTION FROM THE CTC OF THE TEXACO WORKERS UNION AND ITS AFFILIATION WITH THE CSTC. THIS NOW PLACED ALL OF COLOMBIA'S PETROLEUM WORKERS IN THE CSTC. ACCORDING TO CUEVAS, THE ANTI-COMMUNIST TEXACO WORKERS FACTION HAD ASKED HIM FOR ASSISTANCE AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS, HAVING RECEIVED NO HELP FROM THEIR OWN CONFEDERATION. CUEVAS RESPONDED BY SENDING MEN TO PUERTO BOZACA, THE ELECTION SITE, BUT THEY ARRIVED TOO LATE TO SAVE THE SITUATION. THE ELECTION WAS MARKED BY INTIMIDATION AND VIOLENCE, CUEVAS SAID. HE HAS COMPLAINED TO THE MINISTER OF MINES AND FILED A FORMAL REQUEST WITH THE MINISTER OF LABOR TO HAVE THE ELECTION NULLIFIED.

4. A TEXACO OFFICIAL TOLD ANOTHER EMBASSY OFFICER A DIFFERENT VERSION OF THE UNION ELECTION AT PUERTO BOYACA. ACCORDING TO THIS OFFICIAL, THE COMMUNIST FACTION WAS DEFEATED ON EACH ONE OF ITS PROPOSALS, ALTHOUGH THE MEETING AS A WHOLE VOTED TO DISAFFILIATE FROM THE CTC. THERE WAS A QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THIS VOTE WAS LEGAL SINCE THERE WAS NO QUORUM. A REQUEST TO NULLIFY THE ELECTION IS NOW AT THE MINISTRY OF LABOR. THE OFFICIAL DOUBTED THAT THE PRO-COMMUNIST FACTION WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO BRING THE UNION INTO THE CSTC.

5. COMMENT: CUEVAS SOMETIMES TENDS TO OVERDRAMATIZE THE COMMUNIST THREAT IN THE LABOR FIELD IN ORDER TO SOLICIT OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE. NEVERTHELESS, THE CSTC APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY ACTIVE OF LATE IN LABOR AGITATIONS AND IN WINNING OVER NEW AFFILIATES. IF WORKER DISCONTENT OVER INFLATION, LOW WAGES, AND UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUES INTO EARLY NEXT YEAR, AS SEEMS LIKELY
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THE CSTC WILL HAVE A FAVORABLE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TO PROVOKE LABOR UNREST.
WHITE

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